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628 through all the clans and is very rigorously carried out. The widow told us that although her brother had been dead for years, if any member of her clan met the man who killed him he would at once attack him and attempt to wipe out the stain of the blood that had been spilt by spilling more. A few years afterwards there was a combined terrible attack on the Sha-ma clan, when horrible revenge was taken. That story, however, comes later on.

522 While I was sitting by the fire writing up my diary Mr Long was talking away at a rapid rate, telling them all the wonders of the Nosuland beyond the sea. The widow was a good listener. I told Mr Long I was like a deaf man, watching their mouths going but unable to understand anything they were saying. Every now and again there was a very hearty laugh all round, and I joined in, though I had not the least idea where lay the point of the joke. If I could not join in the conversation I could closely watch the faces and dress of those around [303] us. I found out that single girls have only one plait of hair, while married ones have two. There was a great laugh when this information was given me. I can imagine how shocked Chinese women would be if conversation had gone on in their presence on such matters. These Nosu women entered into all the jokes as English women would have, and it was a treat to see how jolly they were.

123 I asked my guide to explain to the people that no one had ever before had such a chance of being in their homes as I, and that such a chance had only come once in my lifetime, and so I wanted to make the most of it. I told them that many Westerners would want to know all about the brave hill Nosu, and that if I could not give them the required information they would laugh at me. There was, however, no need for

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CHAPTER XVI

MORALITY OF THE ABORIGINALS

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ONE of the Nosu who went across the Yangtse with us was a relative of the people who lived at the See-tieh farmstead. Going outside the house on one occasion, I saw a number of the slave girls of the establishment "ragging" this young fellow in a more lively way than he seemed to relish. They were pushing and pulling him about quite roughly, and apparently very much enjoying the fun. The young fellow, being alone, was no match for this lively bevy of farm girls. Ragging is more common among Orientals than has been supposed. One can pick up some lively stories of the ragging of Chinese bridegrooms by the women of the household when he takes his bride home to her friends on the third day after the wedding. Here again we found that in Nosuland the scene we looked on, where the young man was getting quite the worst of the fun, was in accordance with Nosu customs. If a young man pays a visit to any of his relatives the women and slave girls of the household are allowed to get what fun they can out of the visitor. If he objects, this only adds more fuel to the fire of the fun. If he is good-natured and joins in as heartily as the rest he wins the respect of the girls, which is quite worth winning. One part of the fun is to get a gourd of water and try to throw it all over the visitor. He, of course, knows what to expect, and is on his guard and pays them back as well as he can.

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My Chinese "boy," seeing this ragging going on, wondered why this Nosu relative took it all so meekly. He resolved to go to the rescue. He had the usual Chinese ideas of the inferiority of women, and though he himself has a wife who is far smarter than he, and knows how to rule, he still keeps up the fiction that women are inferior, and should always be submissive to their husbands. As soon, however, as the Chinaman went to the rescue of the ragged man the Nosu girls gave him such a time of it that he was glad to clear out in quick time, a wiser man. The girls were having fun with the relative, but with the Chinese it would have been dead earnest, and he was wise enough to take the hint. He resolved not to interfere in family affairs, even though his Chinese sense of propriety was grossly outraged.

In the relations of the sexes the aboriginals of West China differ widely from the Chinese. The purdah and the zenana are unknown among the former. In fact they have gone to the other extreme. Men and women freely mix together, and talk without restraint. With the majority of the tribes and clans this has resulted in gross immorality. One reason why the Chinese so despise the aboriginals is that the latter are so openly immoral and engage in practices which are abhorrent to Chinese ideas. It does not follow for one moment that because the Chinese so despise these aboriginals they themselves are pure and moral. The Chinese have an ideal of purity, and to their eternal credit let it be said that they have never exalted or deified vice. You may go into any of their temples all over the land and see nothing in their idol statues which will shock your sense of decency. You get a far greater shock in Western picture galleries than you do